

**On Friday, May 28, the House of Representatives passed an amendment that I introduced to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011.** My amendment addresses the plight of Iraqis who have worked for the United States in Iraq and whose lives have been placed in grave danger for their service. In particular, my amendment requires the Department of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State, Attorney General, Secretary of Homeland Security, Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and heads of other appropriate Federal agencies (as determined by the Secretary of Defense) to produce a needs assessment of U.S.-affiliated Iraqis and their status. My amendment also requires the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Homeland Security to develop a plan using the needs assessment to expedite resettlement of U.S.-affiliated Iraqis at risk as the United States withdraws from Iraq.  
**(Please find attached a copy of the amendment)**

Under the Status of Forces Agreement signed in November 2008, there is not ONE mention of Iraqis who have worked with the United States, which I find to be most unsettling.

And while the December 2011 date for withdrawal of our troops seems far away, there is another benchmark of August 2010, when nearly 50,000 troops will be withdrawn from Iraq, which will limit our ability to protect U.S.-affiliated Iraqis at risk.

These U.S.-affiliated Iraqis have risked their lives to work alongside our troops, diplomats, and aid workers to help build a more stable and Democratic Iraq committed to peaceful pluralism among both factions and sects. They are considered to be "collaborators" or "traitors" by Al Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgent groups and many have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their work at the hands of these terrorists.

I am increasingly concerned that the Obama administration has turned its focus away from this crisis. As we drawdown U.S. troops in Iraq, the thousands of Iraqis who work for our government and live on our bases will no longer have the security of our military once we are gone. The United States cannot turn its back at this critical juncture.

An organization that I have had the privilege to work with over the past several years, The List Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies has done a remarkable job on this front in advocating for and providing pro bono representation to these courageous Iraqis at risk.

The List Project's founder and executive director Kirk Johnson recently published a report entitled "Tragedy on the Horizon: A History of Just and Unjust Withdrawal." It is a report that I would encourage all of my colleagues to read. **(Please find attached a copy of the List Project's report)**

In particular, the report discusses the withdrawal of British troops from southern Iraq two years ago and states, "militias conducted a systematic manhunt for Iraqi employees of the U.K. In a single incident, 17 interpreters were publically executed, and reports surfaced of others dragged to their deaths behind cars through the streets of Basrah.

To imagine this as an isolated experience ignores this history of withdrawal, a bloody and predictable churn of violence upon those who 'collaborated' with the departing power."

Time is of the essence. We must put in place a plan to ensure that those Iraqis allies who have helped our country are protected. We have a moral obligation to do this, and we still have time to avert a crisis – but not a lot of time.

Turning our backs now would be fatal for our Iraqi allies and would set a negative precedent for other theaters of war in particular Afghanistan where we need to win the loyal collaboration and hearts and minds of the population.

Last week marked a turning point, in that the number of troops in Afghanistan exceeded those in Iraq for the first time since 2003. Reports now suggest that Afghans working as interpreters for the United States are increasingly facing the same lethal risks endured by our Iraqi employees.

We will be hard-pressed to find more help in Afghanistan if the United States is seen as quick to abandon its friends in Iraq.



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